

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 005480

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARN, NEA/PA, NEA/AIA, INR/NESA, R/MR,
I/GNEA, B/BXN, B/BRN, NEA/PPD, NEA/IPA FOR ALTERMAN
USAID/ANE/MEA
LONDON FOR GOLDRICH
PARIS FOR O'FRIEL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR JO](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON SADDAM'S TRIAL

Summary

-- The aftermath of Saddam Hussein's appearance in court last week continues to reverberate in a large number of commentaries. Lead stories in all papers today, July 6, focus on Iraq-related developments, as well as issues related to the Palestinian Territories and Israel.

Editorial Commentary

-- "Saddam between two images"

Daily columnist Jawad Bashiti writes on the op-ed page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm (07/06): "Saddam Hussein will be tried on the basis of evidence presented, but the punishment has already been determined. The court is not convened for the sake of a trial but rather to execute that punishment. Those who did not heed international legitimacy in launching the war on Iraq are certainly not going to value any such legitimacy in putting Saddam Hussein on trial.. Saddam Hussein is now being portrayed as a tyrant and a criminal who committed many war crimes and crimes against humanity. Yet this image is not one that will take away support for him among the Arab people, who still regard him as the Arab ruler who remained truest to the ideals of resistance and enmity towards Israel and the United States. Had Saddam Hussein not lived by this enmity, the Arab people might now regard him as a tyrant who deserves the worst of fates... Arab citizens are likely to be lenient towards a tyrant ruler if they find in him the spirit of national defiance, because national degradation is the strongest feeling Arab citizens feel.. Until Saddam Hussein's replacement comes along, first manufactured by the United States, and later another as someone who rises in inevitable counter-reaction to the Americans' choice, the Arab people will continue to regard Saddam Hussein as a national hero worthy of love and admiration."

-- "Saddam's trial"

Columnist Hassan Barari writes on the op-ed page of centrist, influential among the elite English daily Jordan Times (07/06): "Saddam's is a lost case and even the best lawyers on earth cannot defend him. Puzzling, though, is the decision of some Jordanian lawyers to defend him, referring to him as the leader of the `national movement of Iraq against occupation". The Iraqis do not see him as such. Why should the Jordanian lawyers volunteer to do such a job when an overwhelming majority of Iraqi people suffered badly under his rule? Ironically, those who defend him are the same people who are asking for democracy, human rights and pluralism. One cannot reconcile these values with defending Saddam.. One cannot help but cast doubt on the timing of the trial. First of all, the current interim government is totally illegitimate, as it was installed by a colonial power. The Iraqis did not choose this government. Until an elected government assumes power, such a trial will be irrelevant."

-- "Between two trials"

Daily columnist Urayb Rintawi writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (07/06): "Many of us drew comparisons [Saddam's trial] with . the trial of [Palestinian] Marwan Barghouti before the occupation authority's court. Marwan laughed at his judges. He neither acknowledged nor cared about what he was charged with. He did not try to avoid the mark of resistance and the Intifada.. This image was completely absent from the first court session of Saddam Hussein and his colleagues. The President was defensive and justifying. He spoke much more than he needed to. His sense of public and

personal defeat was very clear in his responses and his gestures.. What is worse than the President's performance was that of his colleagues . who appeared weak and defeated as they looked for a way out at any cost.. All Saddam and his colleagues had to do was say one sentence and the trial would have taken a different course: we do not recognize you, court and government, and the resistance will continue until the country is cleansed of occupation, its symbols and its agents. This would have been logical and in keeping with the heritage, the image and the rhetoric."

-- "Saddam's appearance"

Columnist Kamal Rashid writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (07/06): "Saddam and his colleagues would not have found mercy or compassion from anyone had the American era in Iraq been better than the Saddam era. The Iraqis felt the mistreatment of Americans and the allies, their demands, their grudges and their shame. The Iraqis saw them kill and steal and their actions in Abu Ghraib prison. The mistreatments of the Americans and the British worked in favor of Saddam. The Iraqi resistance worked in favor of Saddam. The Arab frustration about the U.S. stand vis--vis the Arab and Muslim causes worked in favor of Saddam. Yet, America does not really care about Saddam's fate, now that it has taken what it wanted."

GNEHM